

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

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1. A patient record comprising:  
a digital vital patient record (VPR) storing essential predetermined information for a patient;  
and  
a hardcopy patient record (HCPR) storing routine information and essential information,  
wherein the information in the VPR takes precedence over corresponding information in the  
HCPR.

2. The patient record as recited in claim 1, wherein:  
the HCPR is stored in a designated storage area; and  
a printout of the VPR is added to the HCPR each time the HCPR is retrieved from the storage  
area.

3. The patient record as recited in claim 1, wherein:  
the HCPR is stored in a designated storage area; and  
a printout of the VPR corresponds to a request to retrieve the HCPR from the storage area.

4. A method of maintaining vital patient information complementing a hardcopy patient  
record (HCPR) maintained at a healthcare provider's office, comprising:  
generating a digital vital patient record (VPR) corresponding to a patient;  
updating predetermined information in at least one of N categories in the VPR;  
opening the VPR whenever the patient interacts with the healthcare provider's office; and  
inserting a printed copy of the VPR whenever the HCPR is accessed in the healthcare  
provider's office,  
wherein N is an integer greater than 1.

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5. The method as recited in claim 4, wherein one of said N categories comprises currently  
prescribed medications.

6. The method as recited in claim 5, further comprising the step of executing a drug interaction screening program using the predetermined information in the currently prescribed medications category.

7. The method as recited in claim 4, wherein one of said N categories comprises allergies.

8. The method as recited in claim 7, further comprising the step of executing a drug interaction screening program using the predetermined information in the allergies category.

9. The method as recited in claim 4, wherein:

the generating, updating, opening, and inserting steps are performed by a first user in the healthcare provider's office; and

the method further comprises the step of closing the VPR, said closing step being performed by a second user in the healthcare provider's office.

10. The method as recited in claim 4, wherein said opening step is performed by a first user in the healthcare provider's office; and

the method further comprises the step of closing the VPR, said closing step being performed by a second user in the healthcare provider's office.

11. A recording medium for storing a computer readable instructions for converting a general purpose computer into a core records system for maintaining vital patient information complementing a hardcopy patient record (HCPR) maintained at a healthcare provider's office, wherein the instructions permit the computer to generate a digital vital patient record (VPR) corresponding to a patient; to update predetermined information in at least one of N categories in the VPR; to open and update the VPR whenever the patient interacts with the healthcare provider's office; and to print a copy of the VPR for insertion into the HCPR whenever the HCPR is accessed in the healthcare provider's office, wherein N is an integer greater than 1.

12. The recording medium as recited in claim 11, wherein one of said categories comprises

currently prescribed medications.

13. The recording medium as recited in claim 12, wherein the instructions further permit execution of a drug interaction screening program using the predetermined information in the currently prescribed medications category.

14. The recording medium as recited in claim 11, wherein the instructions permit a first user to generate, update, open, and print the VPR and permit a second user to close the VPR.

15. A computer program for converting a general purpose computer into a core records system for maintaining vital patient information complementing a hardcopy patient record (HCPR) maintained at a healthcare provider's office, wherein the instructions permit the computer to generate a digital vital patient record (VPR) corresponding to a patient; to update predetermined information in at least one of N categories in the VPR; to open and update the VPR whenever the patient interacts with the healthcare provider's office; and to print a copy of the VPR for insertion into the HCPR whenever the HCPR is accessed in the healthcare provider's office, wherein N is an integer greater than 1.

16. The computer program as recited in claim 15, wherein one of said categories comprises currently prescribed medications.

17. The computer program as recited in claim 16, wherein the computer program executes a drug interaction screening program using the predetermined information in the currently prescribed medications category.

18. The computer program as recited in claim 15, wherein the computer program permits a first user to generate, update, open, and print the VPR and permits a second user to close the VPR.

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